

**Summary of the
Second Interim Meeting of the
National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference
February 3-5, 1997**

INTRODUCTION

The National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) held its second Interim Meeting February 3-5, 1997, in Bethesda, MD. Approximately 200 individuals from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the States, other Federal agencies, and the private sector participated in the three days of meetings. Among those registered were 55 State representatives, 36 representatives from USEPA, 63 representatives from other Federal agencies, and 106 representatives from the private sector. The agenda for the meeting included a brief opening plenary session; two days of administrative, standing, and *ad hoc* committee working sessions; and a half-day closing plenary session.

OPENING PLENARY SESSION

Dr. Charles Hartwig, Chair of the NELAC Board of Directors, presided over the plenary sessions. In his opening remarks, he noted the progress made in July of 1996 during the Second NELAC Annual Meeting. At the close of that meeting, significant portions of three NELAC standards, as well as the NELAC constitution and bylaws, had been adopted by an overwhelming majority of voting members. Dr. Hartwig stated that the purpose of this Interim Meeting would be to address the issues left unresolved in July, so that by the close of the Third NELAC Annual Meeting, scheduled for July of this year, NELAC will have adopted the full set of standards needed to allow implementation of State and federal accreditation programs.

Dr. Hartwig noted the many comments that have been made regarding the difficulty of addressing the details that must be included in the standards. He encouraged participants to bear in mind the importance of NELAC's broad vision and avoid allowing the details to unnecessarily delay achievement of that vision. He recognized the significant commitment of every individual who has participated in NELAC and reminded the participants that the level of commitment must continue if NELAC is to achieve its full potential. Dr. Hartwig also stated that that very commitment makes it possible for the NELAC committees to address and resolve every issue without compromising the integrity of stakeholders' goals. In closing, Dr. Hartwig asked that participants take time to listen to all points of view during committee discussions and remain committed to finding acceptable compromises on the major issues so that a final set of standards can be adopted in July.

Ms. Jeanne Mourrain, Director of NELAC, spoke briefly regarding the agenda for the meeting. She made special note of the fact that registration for the Interim Meeting had increased significantly over last year and extended a special welcome to those who were attending a NELAC meeting for the first time. Ms. Mourrain noted that, in designing the agenda, an attempt was made to schedule committee working sessions so that participants could attend more than one.

Ms. Mourrain also asked everyone to take time to view the proposed logos for NELAC on display in the lobby. She announced that a vote would be taken in the closing plenary session to select the most popular design.

Dr. Robert Huggett, USEPA's Assistant Administrator for Research and Development, provided the keynote address. He began by stating that he remains one of NELAC's strongest supporters at USEPA and commended NELAC on the tremendous progress that has been made to date. In particular, Dr. Huggett stated that NELAC's achievements are significant and unique because they represent a product generated by a large group with a wide diversity of perspectives working toward a shared goal.

Dr. Huggett provided participants with a brief status report on some USEPA activities that are of particular importance to NELAC and its members. These included:

- Establishment of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) and the NELAP budget at USEPA,
- Implementation of performance-based method systems (PBMS) by USEPA programs,
- Creation of the Environmental Monitoring Management Council's (EMMC's) methods development initiative, and
- USEPA's ongoing study regarding privatization of its water laboratory performance evaluation (PE) studies.

With regard to NELAP, Dr. Huggett stated that the EMMC Policy Council has once again reaffirmed its commitment to and support for NELAC. The Council has taken up the issue of how to provide a budget for NELAP over the long term. For the next two years, NELAP will be situated in the Office of Research and Development (ORD) and will receive an annual budget of approximately \$300,000. Dr. Huggett also announced that the EMMC *Ad Hoc* Panel on National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation will be working in the coming months to strengthen coordination between NELAC and USEPA programs. The Panel will make specific recommendations to the EMMC Policy Council regarding implementation steps and policy issues. Dr. Huggett noted that adoption of a full set of NELAC standards in July will be an important step in the implementation process.

Dr. Huggett announced that the Policy Council has agreed to adopt PBMS across the Agency. Two memoranda have been issued by EMMC on this matter: one announcing the Policy Council's decision and a second instructing program office staff to prepare implementation plans for PBMS. Draft implementation plans are expected to be complete in the spring. Dr. Huggett noted that both the Office of Air and Radiation (OAR) and the Office of Water (OW) have begun incorporating PBMS into current programs.

With regard to the EMMC methods development initiative, Dr. Huggett stated that it is EMMC's goal to ensure coordination of method development activities at USEPA so that duplication of effort

can be minimized. He noted that EMMC is developing a framework for coordination that will ensure that new methods receive full and appropriate peer review.

On the subject of privatizing USEPA's laboratory PE studies, Dr. Huggett acknowledged that USEPA's PE studies are an important concern for NELAC. He recognized the overall importance of PE studies to USEPA and State monitoring programs and assured NELAC that USEPA remains committed to the studies and that they will continue to be an integral part of future USEPA programs. He noted that the current effort is intended to find reasonable ways of streamlining the studies so that USEPA's available resources can be applied as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Dr. Huggett stated that USEPA is still in the process of examining options for externalizing the PE studies and that no decision has been made yet on this issue. He briefly discussed three options that are among those under consideration:

- USEPA and NELAC working together to set national standards for PE studies and relying on the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to implement a program for overseeing private-sector PE study providers,
- Turning the program over completely to one or more private-sector third parties, and
- Requesting that Congress provide USEPA with fee-retention authority so that USEPA can continue to oversee and conduct the studies.

He noted that other options are also under consideration and that USEPA hopes to have a final decision this summer on how to proceed.

In closing, Dr. Huggett noted two new initiatives of potential interest to NELAC. First, he announced that USEPA is developing an Agency wide system for integrated data management and stated that he hopes NELAC's national data and information systems will be compatible with the integrated system. Second, he announced that USEPA has established the Advanced Monitoring Initiative (AMI), a program designed to engage USEPA's Federal and private-sector partners in developing environmental monitoring applications for new technologies.

At the conclusion of Dr. Huggett's remarks, Mr. Ted Coopwood, Executive Secretary of NELAC, adjourned the session, noting that the Board of Directors is seeking volunteers for membership on NELAC standing and administrative committees. He asked that any interested volunteers sign up at the registration desk or speak directly with him or with Dr. Hartwig.

STANDING AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE WORKING SESSIONS

Working sessions of the NELAC standing and administrative committees began on Monday, February 3, at 10:30 a.m. and continued through noon on Wednesday, February 5. The meeting schedule was as follows:

- The *Ad Hoc* Committee on Field Measurements, the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the NELAC National Database, and the standing committees on On-Site Assessment, Implementation, and Proficiency Testing met on Monday, February 3.
- The standing committees on Proficiency Testing, Accrediting Authority, Accreditation Process, Quality Systems, and Program Policy and Structure met on Tuesday, February 4. A joint meeting of the Proficiency Testing and Program Policy and Structure Committees was held Tuesday morning.
- The administrative committees on Conference Management and Membership and Outreach and the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Coordination met on Wednesday morning, February 5.

Each committee chair established the agenda for his/her individual meeting. Reports on the outcome of each working session were presented in the closing plenary session.

CLOSING PLENARY SESSION

Mr. Coopwood opened the closing plenary session and reviewed the agenda for the session, which included the following items:

- A brief presentation by Dr. Bob Stephens on the Innovations in American Government Award,
- Selection of the NELAC logo,
- Reports from the committee working sessions,
- Closing remarks from Dr. Hartwig,
- A brief recognition presentation by Ms. Ramona Trovato, director of USEPA's Office of Radiation and Indoor Air (ORIA), and
- A summary of next steps by Ms. Mourrain.

Dr. Stephens, Past Chair of the NELAC Board of Directors, announced that EPA Administrator Carol Browner has nominated NELAC for the Innovations in American Government Award. The award is jointly sponsored by the Ford Foundation and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Dr. Stephens stated that a list of 100 finalists for the award will be announced this summer. Following the announcement of finalists, a selection committee will conduct interviews and gather the information needed to select 10 winners for the award. He noted that NELAC participants may be contacted by members of the selection committee. If successful, NELAC will receive \$100,000 for use in outreach and communications efforts.

Ms. Mourrain conducted an informal voting session to make the final selection of the NELAC logo. As a result of a show of hands, a logo was adopted by the Board of Directors from the four candidates provided for conference attendee review. Final modifications will be made to allow for both black-and-white and color versions, and the logo will be made available as soon as possible. The logo will be used on official NELAC communications and on all NELAC accreditation certificates. In accordance with the NELAC bylaws, it can be used only with the written permission of the Board of Directors.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

***Ad Hoc* Committee on Coordination**

Dr. Jim Pearson, chair of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Coordination, presented his committee report. He thanked the members of the Committee for their efforts in reviewing the most recent revised versions of the standards and identifying areas of overlap and conflict. He noted that a copy of the Committee's report has been distributed to all standing committee chairs. Changes were not made to the standards as a result of the Coordinating Committee's latest effort prior to the meeting, however, because the schedule did not allow enough time to complete revisions. Dr. Pearson asked that all standing committee chairs review the coordination issues identified for their chapters and confer with their committees and other committee chairs, as needed, to resolve these issues.

Dr. Pearson requested that the Board of Directors establish a schedule for completing the next draft of revised standards to allow sufficient time for review by the Coordination Committee so that issues can be resolved in advance of the July meeting. He stated that this will allow the standards adopted in July to be as complete and consistent as possible. He also announced that Mr. Fred Haeberer of USEPA's Quality Assurance Division (QAD) is preparing a unified glossary of terms for the NELAC standards. The glossary will be presented at the Third NELAC Annual Meeting in July.

***Ad Hoc* Committee on Field Measurements**

Dr. Bart Simmons, chair of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Field Measurements, presented his committee report. He stated that the Committee will not propose standards to the NELAC membership this summer. The Committee will solicit information from NELAC members this spring in order to obtain guidance on establishing an appropriate scope for the field measurements aspect of NELAC.

Dr. Simmons noted the following findings, conclusions, and issues that resulted from the Committee's working session:

- At the recommendation of the Committee, the NELAC Program Policy and Structure Committee will consider the issue of whether a program of accreditation or certification of individuals engaged in field monitoring should be pursued by NELAC.
- The Committee will review draft uniform standards for sampling and field testing and a draft field compliance manual published by the Department of the Navy.
- The Committee will evaluate PBMS for potential field applications.

- The Committee agreed that the distinction between and definitions for screening tests and definitive tests, used by some USEPA programs, are not applicable to NELAC concerns in field measurement.
- The Committee will solicit information from NELAC members to receive input in response to two questions, as follows:
 1. Should NELAC develop standards for field activities and offer accreditation for a range of field testing services? If so, what priorities should be established for field measurement areas to be addressed?
 2. Should NELAC develop standards for certification of individuals engaged in field measurements? If so, what priorities should be established for addressing areas of testing?

Dr. Simmons noted two outstanding issues that the Committee plans to address by August of this year:

- What field standards, if any, should NELAC develop?
- Should the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Field Measurements become a permanent standing committee of NELAC?

He noted that the Committee will make a recommendation regarding the latter issue at the Third NELAC Annual Meeting in July. In closing, Dr. Simmons stated that the information gathering from NELAC members is expected to be under way in May of this year and that the Committee will present a full report on the results as well as recommendations to NELAC in July.

Membership and Outreach Committee

Dr. Michael Volz, chair of the Membership and Outreach Committee, presented his committee report. He noted the following accomplishments:

- The Committee will send out new letters to the governors requesting appointment or reaffirmation of their State representatives to NELAC. The letters will highlight the importance of providing authority for out-of-state travel.
- A final draft of the NELAC Fact Sheet has been completed and will be transmitted to Ms. Mourrain as soon as possible.
- The Committee will work with Ms. Mourrain to develop alternative formats for the Fact Sheet, with the goal of effectively reaching as many audiences as possible.

Conference Management Committee

Ms. Marion Thompson, chair of the Conference Management Committee, presented her committee report. She noted that the Committee's responsibility is to plan both the Annual and Interim Meetings and announced that the Third NELAC Annual Meeting will be held July 28-31, 1997, in Dallas, TX, at the Wyndham Anatole Hotel. She noted the following outcomes from the Committee's working session:

- The Committee is exploring options for electronic voting in order to improve the efficiency of the voting process.
- The Committee has solicited proposals from two private organizations for co-sponsorship of the meetings. They will also approach other Federal agencies to discuss the possibility of co-sponsorship.
- The Committee has considered the possibility of conducting a technical exhibition in conjunction with the Annual Meeting in order to defray conference costs. Committee members agreed that the exhibits should be limited to products and services germane to NELAC.
- With regard to obtaining sponsorship for coffee breaks and meals during NELAC meetings, the Committee has concluded that possible conflict-of-interest (COI) issues will prohibit the use of one single organization for this purpose. The Committee is pursuing the possibility of establishing a consortium of organizations for this function.
- The Committee has agreed to ask that, in the event fees are established for meeting registration, the Board consider establishing a special fee for Federal agency representatives.
- The Committee has agreed that the registration fee for the July meeting should be \$100 per participant.
- The Committee will work with the Board of Directors to ensure that notices of future meetings are provided with sufficient time to allow State representatives to make timely requests for travel funds.
- The Committee has agreed that the Annual Meetings should also be held in the home State of the NELAC chair. Suggested locations for the 1998 Interim Meeting include Dallas, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio, TX. A recommendation will be made in July at the Third NELAC Annual Meeting.

Nominating Committee

Dr. Bob Stephens, chair of the Nominating Committee, stated that his committee was unable to meet as planned, due to a scheduling conflict. He announced that a slate of nominees, including a chair-elect and two board members at large, will be completed by May 1, 1997. The proposed slate will

be posted on the NELAC Bulletin Board located at the Internet address (<http://134.67.104.12/html/nelac/nelac.htm#NL02>) prior to the Third NELAC Annual Meeting. Dr. Stephens asked that anyone wishing to recommend nominees or be involved in the nominations process contact him directly.

Program Policy and Structure Committee

Dr. Ken Jackson, chair of the Program Policy and Structure Committee, presented his committee report. He stated that the Committee met for one full day to discuss and receive suggestions on Chapter 1 of the standards. The Committee also met jointly with the Proficiency Testing Committee to discuss the issue of fields of testing and with the Accrediting Authority Committee to discuss the issue of reciprocity. He announced that the entirety of Chapter 1 will be presented to the Conference for a vote in July, as well as four amendments to the Constitution, most of which involve minor changes to the Bylaws. In particular, he noted that Article VII of the Bylaws will be proposed for amendment to add one additional USEPA delegate, representing the USEPA Assistant Administrator for Policy, Planning and Evaluation. Dr. Jackson also stated that some global terminology changes have been implemented in the Constitution and Bylaws and in Chapter 1. For example, correct usage of NELAC and NELAP has been addressed and references to “members” have been changed to “voting members,” where appropriate.

Dr. Jackson noted several outstanding issues in Chapter 1 to be resolved, including:

- Whether NELAP will evaluate and approve one principal laboratory in each participating State,
- How to define "fields of testing" and whether to accredit by analyte and method or by analyte only, and
- How to consistently address a laboratory's responsibility to comply with relevant health and safety regulations throughout the standards (specifically, in Chapters 3 and 4).

Dr. Jackson also noted that a straw poll taken in the working session indicated that there is solid agreement on the need for unconditional reciprocity among State programs. Participants noted, however, that some States have laws that will prevent their acting as a secondary accrediting authority. Consequently, some minor amendment to the relevant language in the standards may be necessary to address this issue.

Prior to the July meeting, the Committee plans to complete its revisions to Chapter 1 and any additional revisions to the Constitution and Bylaws. He asked that any written comments on any of the three documents be forwarded to him within 30 days.

Proficiency Testing Committee

Ms. Andrea Jirka, chair of the Proficiency Testing Committee, presented her committee report. She stated that the Committee will present four new documents in July: a new draft of Chapter 2 and three appendices:

- Appendix A on acceptance criteria for proficiency testing providers,
- Appendix B on proficiency testing sample acceptance guidelines, and
- Appendix C on criteria for evaluating proficiency testing results.

She noted that the Committee will be revising the current Chapter 2 based on comments received during the working session and asked that any additional comments be forwarded to her in writing as soon as possible. She also noted the following outcomes from the Committee's working session:

- The Committee has agreed to develop specifications for an oversight body for the Proficiency Testing program, and
- The Committee will be working with the Program Policy and Structure Committee to resolve the issue of differing bases for accreditation (analyte/method-specific) and for proficiency testing (analyte-specific).

Ms. Jirka stated that the following accomplishments are expected prior to the Third NELAC Annual Meeting in July:

- Review and revision of Chapter 2 and Appendices A and B;
- Completion of a draft Appendix C;
- Completion of draft standards for proficiency testing "oversight bodies;"
- Completion of draft standards for special cases, such as radiochemistry tests, biological tests, and microbiological tests;
- Announcement of a final decision regarding the basis for accreditation; and
- Incorporation of suggested additions to Chapter 2.

She also noted that the Committee will provide clarification on its specifications for database design by the end of December of this year.

On-Site Assessment Committee

Mr. Gary Bennett, chair of the On-Site Assessment Committee, presented his committee report. He reminded participants that only Section 3.4.5 ("Confidential Business Information Concerns") was not adopted at the Second NELAC Annual Meeting and that it is the only section that will be presented for a vote at the meeting this July. He noted the following issues that remain to be addressed by the Committee before July:

- Differences between Chapters 3 and 4 regarding the handling of confidential business information (CBI), including the definition of what constitutes CBI;
- Appropriate requirements for training assessors for purposes of taking custody of CBI;
- The status of assessors currently performing on-site assessments for State programs and an appropriate “grandfather” clause applicable to current State assessors; and
- Use of and access to a laboratory’s internal audit results by on-site assessors.

Mr. Bennett stated that all of these issues will be addressed before the revised draft of Chapter 3 is completed. In addition, he noted that the Committee has asked that USEPA legal counsel review the new draft of Section 3.4.5 prior to the July meeting. He also announced that an assessor training manual is in development and that a draft will be published on the NELAC Bulletin Board prior to the Third NELAC Annual Meeting. In addition, the Committee has agreed to develop draft standards for the assessor training program. These also will be completed before the July meeting.

Accreditation Process Committee

Ms. Margaret Prevost, chair of the Accreditation Process Committee, provided her committee report. She reminded the Conference that Chapter 4 is intended to be an overview document that summarizes various aspects of other chapters of the standards. Consequently, Chapter 4 cannot be considered final until all other chapters have been finalized. She noted that the following sections were not adopted at the Second NELAC Annual Meeting:

- Section 4.1.1, "Personnel Qualifications;"
- Section 4.1.3, "Proficiency Testing Samples;"
- Section 4.1.2, "On-Site Assessments;" and
- Section 4.5, "Interim Accreditation."

She stated that, as a result of discussions during the working session, the Committee agreed on:

- How to address accreditation status in cases where the accrediting authority cannot conduct an on-site assessment on a timely basis (Section 4.5), and
- How to define and appropriately qualify the “responsible person of record” (Section 4.1.1).

She also stated that the Committee concluded that the current version of Chapter 4 provides too much detail and agreed on an approach to streamline the chapter.

Ms. Prevost identified the following next steps for the Committee:

- Review and incorporate comments received during the working session by March 1, 1997;
- Complete consideration of enforcement issues (including addressing the effects of some State laws on due process considerations) by May 1, 1997; and
- Reconcile Chapter 4 with other chapters as they become available.

Quality Systems Committee

Ms. Sylvia Labie, chair of the Quality Systems Committee, provided her committee report. She noted that the Committee had a number of desired outcomes for their working session, including the following:

- Reviewing all proposed standards,
- Reaching consensus on language for all proposed standards,
- Reaching consensus on the format for Appendix C,
- Providing guidance to the Subcommittee on Radioanalysis,
- Identifying any new issues to be addressed, and
- Soliciting comments and recommendations on how to address the issue of minimum detection limits (MDLs).

She reported that the Committee was successful in achieving all of these goals.

Ms. Labie stated that final language for nearly all of the outstanding sections of Chapter 5 will be ready for publication by mid-April. Three issues remain to be resolved and may not result in proposed amendments to the chapter in time for the Annual Meeting. These are:

- Revision of Section D.1.4 regarding MDLs,
- Revision of Appendix C on PBMS to reflect the USEPA checklist, and
- Review/revision of Appendix C to reflect NELAC's rather than USEPA's perspective.

Ms. Labie reported the following next steps for the Committee:

- Receive all written comments by February 28, 1997;
- Review comments and make revisions as appropriate by mid-April;

- Continue conducting monthly teleconferences; and
- Conduct a full Committee meeting in late March or early April.

She noted that the Committee received considerable constructive comment during the working session and thanked all those who participated.

Accrediting Authority Committee

Mr. John Anderson, chair of the Accrediting Authority Committee provided his committee report. He announced that Chapter 6 has been rewritten as a result of weekly teleconferences, which occurred during the Fall. Many sections are now ready for a vote of the full Conference, however, the Committee believes that it should conduct a full review of the chapter and make any necessary changes before submitting it for vote in July. Some outstanding issues that remain to be addressed include the following:

- Can an accrediting authority with interim approval grant reciprocity?
- Can individuals who are not State employees be included as members of NELAP assessment teams?
- Can third parties participate in NELAP assessments of accrediting authorities?
- Should NELAC consider recognizing third parties by Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) (as in California)?
- Should NELAC consider requiring NELAP assessment teams to accompany State assessors to on-site assessments during the approval of accrediting authorities?
- Will States have more than one approved accrediting authority? How should multiple authorities within a State be handled?
- Should accrediting authorities accredit their own State laboratories?

Mr. Anderson reported the following Committee accomplishments:

- The Committee agreed to require the following qualifications from NELAP assessors:
 - A total of three years' experience conducting similar assessments, involving a minimum of four assessments per year;
 - Satisfactory completion of International Standards Organization (ISO) 9000 Lead Assessor Training;

- Experience with Federal or State rulemaking procedures and practices; and
 - Experience developing laboratory accreditation programs within the past five years.
- The Committee agreed that, if possible, USEPA should accredit State laboratories (as is now done for the Drinking Water Certification Program);
 - The Committee agreed that further work is needed to clarify the requirements for quality systems applicable to accrediting authorities; and
 - The Committee will coordinate with the Program Policy and Structure Committee to ensure that Chapters 1 and 6 are consistent.

He stated that the Committee will continue its schedule of teleconferences until the first week in May and that Chapter 6 will be finalized prior to the July meeting.

Implementation Committee

Dr. Harry Otto reported for the Implementation Committee. He reminded the Conference that the charge to his committee is to address legislative implementation of environmental laboratory accreditation programs at the State level. He noted the following outcomes from the Committee's working session:

- A final version of a questionnaire to be used in surveying the States has been completed.
- Sample environmental laboratory accreditation legislation, based on New Mexico law, also has been completed.
- A paper provided by the State of Florida, detailing some cross-cutting issues related to legislative implementation, was distributed to the Committee.

With regard to the survey, Dr. Otto stated that the purpose of the questionnaire will be to ascertain States' receptiveness to implementing NELAC. The Committee will be working with the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) to identify appropriate leadership in each State legislative body and appropriate committee chairs, to whom the survey will be distributed.

The Committee has requested comment on the draft model legislation and is seeking examples from other States. Additional examples will help the Committee to better understand the differences between State programs and legislation and to better address the special needs that States may have. Dr. Otto noted that the model legislation has six elements:

- Establishment of a certification process,

- Establishment of certification criteria,
- Provisions for a fee-collection process,
- Requirement for laboratory compliance data to be publicly available,
- Provisions for enforcement and due process, and
- Optional provisions for the use of third parties.

He stated that the next important goal for the Committee will be to identify one key legislator in each State who would be willing to sponsor legislation.

CLOSING REMARKS OF THE NELAC CHAIR

In his closing remarks, Dr. Hartwig congratulated the participants on their continuing commitment to completing the standards by July. He noted the increasing importance of addressing issues of overlap in the standards and stated that the overlap which exists has occurred largely because of the process by which the standards were developed, involving a collection of independently functioning committees. Dr. Hartwig recognized the value of the two joint committee sessions that were held during the week and asked the committee chairs to make a concerted effort to work together to address coordination issues. He also asked that the committee chairs provide their final documents no later than mid-April to Dr. Pearson for review by the Coordination Committee.

Dr. Hartwig noted that he has been asked many questions concerning implementation and how the implementation process will begin. He stated that the Board of Directors has begun addressing implementation and welcomes any comments or suggestions. He stated that he and the Board will keep members informed as preliminary plans for implementation are developed.

Finally, Dr. Hartwig announced that he has constituted an *ad hoc* committee to design the national database. The *Ad Hoc* Committee on the National Database met briefly on Monday evening, during which it identified issues to be addressed. The goal of the Committee is to define the minimum information needed for the database.

Ms. Trovato addressed the group briefly. She commended participants on the work that was done during the meeting. She also announced that she has established a permanent plaque recognizing the NELAC Chairs. The plaque will be displayed in the Office of the Assistant Administrator for Research and Development at USEPA.

NEXT STEPS

Ms. Mourrain identified the following next steps for NELAC:

- The Third NELAC Annual Meeting will be held July 28-31, 1997. The Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) will meet on July 28. The deadline for hotel reservations is June 30.
- Committee chairs should work to complete all chapters of the standards for review by the Board of Directors by May 30. The chapters will be posted on the NELAC World Wide Web (WWW) site by June 30.
- The *Ad Hoc* Committee on the National Database will continue to meet.
- The Board of Directors will begin considering mechanisms for implementation.

Ms. Mourrain also identified the following next steps for USEPA:

- In order to address NELAC implementation by USEPA, NELAP is working with the USEPA Regional Offices to identify options for staffing the accrediting authority assessment aspect of the program. She stated that her preference is to involve Regional, NELAP, and State staff on all NELAP assessment teams.
- An assessor training manual is currently being drafted. The On-Site Assessment Committee will be discussing options for how to incorporate assessor training into NELAC.
- NELAP is coordinating with NIST in order to better define a NIST program for overseeing proficiency testing providers. NELAP is also considering arranging for the political leadership at USEPA and NIST to meet and agree on their support for such a program.
- NELAP will meet with the EMMC's Policy Council to further discuss long-range funding for NELAP.

Ms. Mourrain also discussed several issues related to coordination. She noted that NELAP is meeting regularly with the Federal partners. Efforts are under way to review the NELAC standards and ensure that the needs of other Federal agencies are met. NELAP is also working with the Implementation Committee and the NCSL to inform legislators about NELAC and to obtain information on existing State regulations and statutes. NELAP will also coordinate with the ISO to discuss opportunities for incorporating ISO standards into NELAC and to address areas where there are differences between the NELAC and ISO standards.

Following Ms. Mourrain's comments, Dr. Hartwig declared the Second NELAC Interim Meeting adjourned.